Constructing Royal Character: King Richard in *Richard Coer de Lyon*

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Prior to the fifteenth century there is only one extant romance about King Richard the Lionheart, and that is a translation from a lost Anglo-Norman original, the *Richard Coer de Lyon*.[1] This article focuses on the developing character of Richard[2] and explores how a romance structure of *aventure* and a romance discourse shape royal characterization. The anonymous author of this fourteenth-century romance presents Richard as a figure of spectacular, but easily intelligible romance proportions.[3]

The Richard constructed by *Richard Coer de Lyon* is less easily understood than he appears at first. Indeed, he is contradictory, incoherent, and in flux. I focus on four major points, each of which deals with an aspect of the rhetorical structuring of character. My argument suggests that royal character is a rhetorical construction, affected by generic expectations, by social pressures, and by the interplay between different discourses.

The author's use of realistic details creates credibility. For instance, we are told the details of actual chivalric ceremonies, of Richard's sleepless night planning tactics, of chess games, and of Richard's specially made ax. Second, the author uses romance conventions to create the character of Richard as an English romance knight. However, the author plays with audience expectations about character, juxtaposing stable figures of romance with a Richard who is wildly diverse in origins, intentions, behavior, and sanctity, thereby creating a fragmented character. In this part of the article, I will draw on other Middle English romances to set up an "horizon of expectations," for purposes of comparison.

Third, the author partially structures his romance and his character by drawing on the medieval notion of the carnival king,[4] who is a figure in disguise, a figure of parody subject to the turns of another great medieval symbol, Fortune's wheel. For example, Richard is a hero, a crusader knight at one moment, and then a brash youth rebuked

by his elders in the tournament; he is surrounded by the signs of God's approval at one point, and then told to his face that he is a mad devil and summarily unhorsed. Previous authors who also wrote about royal character dealt with recalcitrant material, the alien, and the grotesque, by discussing their characters in conventional terms; in this text, romance conventions cannot always contain Richard's alien violence, and he seems a fragmented character. His habit of disguise signifies a deeper fluctuation between adopting and repudiating paternal and maternal introjections and projections.

Related to the above, and my fourth point, the author portrays Richard as a specifically English king, who is shaped as a character by his English chauvinism. This is a response to the continual Franco-English wars and skirmishes of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. This evocation of his nationality serves not only to include Richard in a specific cultural space, as a figure against whom we can measure the French king, as well as the "paynim" East, but also to focus and to unify Richard's character and identity as a participant in the allegiances and wars of his father. Even here, however, Richard's alliances are not strictly paternal. His inheritance of French possessions comes through his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, who also commanded his loyalty against his father, Henry II.

As in many texts about real persons, the author uses the familiar rhetorical strategy of stressing realistic details to develop character, and in so doing, he creates the illusion of reality for his fictional creation. Further, this detailing of the circumstantial minutiae of a life does not focus on Richard alone; we are given intelligible motivations for the actions of a betrayed steward (2135-230), for the snubbed minstrel who betrays Richard to the German king (665-95), for King Philip's jealous duplicity (3830-35), and for the actions of Richard's various enemies. Richard's motivations are not always so clear, drawn as they are from a mixture of historical and romance invention.

The author makes his character credible when he discusses Richard's weapons, or his pastimes, or his interest and expertise in tactics. For example, Richard has a specially ordered ax:

> Kyng Rychard, as j understonde,
> Or he wente out of Englonde,
> Let hym make an axe, for the nones,
> To breke therwith the Sarasyns bones.
> The heed was wrought ryght wele,
> Therin was twenty pounde of stele;

And whan he came into Cyprys-londe,
That axe he toke in his honde,
All that he hytte he all tofrapped. (2209-17)

This ax is mentioned several times throughout the romance. It does serve the function of an identifiable and special weapon, which many romance heroes carry, but it also has an aura of solidity to it, adding to the realism of the character who wields it. Elsewhere, we get a sense of Richard's other amusements: when a messenger announces the betrayal of an honest steward by a king ill-disposed to Richard, we see him playing chess in the galley. The author adds that Richard was playing with the Earl of Richmond, and winning "all that he layed" (2186).

This habit of winning carries over into Richard's tactics, which are invariably successful: the writer does take care to make Richard's battles and tactical planning sound possible. For instance, we are told that Richard spends a sleepless night planning his tactics in his tent the night before he will face a superior force (1840-46) . We are also given the occasional English setback and a gradual shifting of the battle towards the French, which also functions as an expected romance narrative convention. One easy way to amplify the courage of one side is to stress the strength of the eventual losers; it also allows the author to expand at length on the placement and specific use of such weapons as mangonels (4327-51), targes (4381-92), and arrows, quarrels, axes, swords, and arbalests. We get a sense that the author is discussing a real figure, who is responsible for all these actions. However, the sheer repetition of unmotivated and unparticularized incident, such as visits to castles and single combats, works against the production of a coherent and individualized character.

If the author's use of realistic details overwhelms the singular nature of a character, then what about his use of romance conventions? We can approach the issue of Richard's character through audience expectations created by the three-part structure of prologue, narrative, and epilogue in other medieval romances. In order to discuss the unique qualities of the opening and closing of this poem,[5] and thence to discover the peculiarities in the portrayal of Richard, we must first note the typical features of Middle English romance,[6] since the difficulties inherent in beginning, narrating, and finishing a romance are not restricted to this one text, and examination of the generic conventions will indicate not only the audience expectations, but also the play within those.[7] The prologue in this romance sets up a process of disorienta-

tion, while the epilogue matches the prologue in its enigmatic closural devices.

Prologues of Middle English romances contain three key features for the interpretation of Richard: the address to an audience, the outline of the history of the chief participant, and the attribution of some motivation for the action. First, Middle English romances are almost all addressed to an audience. Second, these romances announce their narrative material by briefly outlining the personal history of the hero, before providing the causes of the action in the poem. Thus, in *Horn*[8] and in *Havelok the Dane*, the poet describes the genealogy of the hero, but restricts his focus to the preceding generation. Third, the prologue discusses the motivations of the action, which takes place away from the court, and confidently assigns rational reasons for the behavior of the hero or his enemies.

The epilogue echoes these narrative strategies so that each of the romances ends appropriately and expectedly. The epilogues refer back to the prologues and provide resolution and closure. They generally observe three main conventions: return to the court, allusion to the hero's stable future or that of his children who embody the stability he has won, and a request for benediction.[9] These closural devices reinforce the finality of the ending, and imply that the adventure is complete, since the hero is no longer the focus of attention, and the story is over. Third, the request for benediction is almost universal. This plea for prayer matches the initial request for audience, while a successful marriage, socially productive of order, replaces an unstable childhood or adolescence, or the social disruption attendant on the exercise of chivalric virtues.

Although *The Romance of Richard the Lionheart* does use many of these conventions, it does so in a way that, again, leads to a fragmentation of this royal character. There is a conventional plea for audience, but the text plays with two expectations: it glorifies Richard by comparing him with the heroes of epic, Roland, Oliver, Turpin, Hector and Achilles, and Arthur and Gawain. The author lists every hero he can, and that is conventional enough. Then he proudly proclaims, "what folk they slew in that pres" (20). This is a little dissonant with the image of Gawain, already evoked as a "curteys knight," (15) but we can accept the overall image of Richard as a knight who was never a coward, who was always the best warrior (4, 31).

Next, there is no synopsis of the narrative material. Instead we go directly to the hero's lineage, and discover that "slaying" is related intimately to Richard's origins—the author casually points out:

Lordynges, herkenes bifore,
How King Rychard was gete and bore.
Hys fader hyȝte king Henry
In hys tyme, sikerly,
Als j finde in my sawe,
seynt thomas was islawe
at Cantyrbury at þe awterston,
þere manye myracles are idon. (35-40)

From a murderous father and a land and time of miracles, we move instantly and without editorial comment on the death of Thomas a Becket to the quest for a wife for King Henry, the historical Eleanor of Aquitaine, her flight and her diabolic origin.[10]

There are two related major points to this uncertainty created by generic transgression and play: Richard's ambiguous parents and the unstable notion of character that results from this. Neither the aetiological nor the validating impulse explains the ambiguous words chosen to describe Henry and Eleanor. Cassodorien (the historical Eleanor) appears to be a dutiful daughter of a strange pagan lord, who rules a kingdom from a mysterious white ship. She reluctantly obeys her father's wish that she marry Henry. Everything seems correct, until one of Henry's barons points out to him that his wife never attends Mass. Surprised at this omission in piety, which he has failed to notice, Henry allows the concerned baron to use force to restrain the queen from leaving the church at the moment of Consecration, as she had done for the last fifteen years. Cassodorien is revealed as a demon in disguise, when she flies out the window, and out of the poem. The poet is brief in his remarks about Henry, mentioning only conventional gestures, words, and speeches, other than the remarks about the murdered Thomas of Canterbury, for whose death Henry made public penance. The poet winds up Henry's life in eight lines, saying straightfacedly:

And with her doughter she fled her waye,
That never after she was isey.
The kynge wondered of that thynge,
That she made such an endynge,
For love that he was served so;
Wolde he never after come ther ne go,
He let ordeyne, after his endynge,
His sone Rycharde to be kynge. (233-40)

These oddities in the portrayal of Richard's parents create an oddity in Richard too. The poet presents us with a progress through the epic and romance past to the time of contemporary miracles performed by a murdered archbishop, eventually culminating in Richard, the child abandoned by his mother at the moment of consecration at Mass. The Young King Henry (Richard's older brother) is never mentioned, although he acceded to the English throne before Richard, while their father Henry II was still alive. Eleanor carries John (Bad King John), and a daughter named Topyas (who didn't exist), for a while in her escape, but she drops John, so that he is crippled from the fall. The genealogy is a routine method of exalting the Arthurian court, or the Norman/Plantagenet dynasty, as well as an introduction to the hero—but the heroic convention leads us to expect something quite different from what we get. The author plays with romance conventions to include Richard in the pantheon of romance heroes, and then abruptly highlights his demonic nature, which serves to exclude him from that company. This hero is half devil. There is also the well-known legend that the Plantagenet family was descended from the devil, a rumor probably originating with Black Count Fulk, also known as Fulk Nerra, one of Richard's Angevin ancestors. Both Henry II and Richard found it convenient or amusing to acknowledge the truth of this legend.[11] Thus, when Richard is introduced, we are in the world of dubious marvels rather than epic, where heavenly and diabolical influences contend as elements of Richard's past, and we see him in the carefully provided context of fundamentally uncertain expectations.

We move immediately to Richard's first adventure. There are several important consequences here for the way we can understand Richard's character. First, where other Middle English romances deal with lineage, we can expect a hero to be a son of a hero—but here, the hero is the son of a demon on one hand, and the son of a sacrilegious murderer on the other. Second, Eleanor, "makes such an endynge" (236), that she is elided from the text; in place of the now ambiguous mother, Richard receives identity through the law of his father. He is inscribed in the symbolic, paternal order, when Henry "let ordeyne, after his endynge, / His sone Rycharde to be kynge" (239-40). The text repudiates the imaginary as associated with the mother, making her abject, and proceeds to ally Richard with rule, law, and the king his father. However, the maternal threat of fragmentation, which is obliquely realized in the capture of a less favored male child, John, is insufficiently repressed. This ambiguous heritage compromises Richard's every action.

Overall, the shifting intentions of the prologue engender profound rhetorical ambiguities which culminate in the enigmatic close of the epilogue, which matches the prologue at least in some generic ways. Conventionally, the poet refers to the constructed nature of the tale, and emphasizes the past quality of events, before he prays for salvation. Superficially, the closural devices seem unremarkable, but there are several important things to note here, such as the return to court, the hero's future, and the final plea for prayer. Richard does return to court, and there is a celebratory mood, accompanied by allusion to the hero's future and social continuity. Then in a postscript and casual way, Richard sets out for the siege of Chaluz, which he wages unjustly, according to the poet (and certainly according to the inhabitants and lord of Chaluz). In his desire to be *seen* as a fighter, Richard foolishly ignores a minor arrow wound and succumbs to infection.[12] As for the hero's future, he has none—he betrays all his alliances with noble ladies in his past, so that the shadow of King John, the boy crippled in the fall from his demon mother's grasp, hangs over the epilogue. Instead of completion and resolution, we get loose ends.

Thus far I have argued that the overwhelming use of realistic details and generic anomalies in the prologue and epilogue lead us to the fact that this character is established only to be destabilized. We see a continuation of this extraordinary fragmentation in Richard's early career as new king. Given his origins, we can expect Richard to be not only the proclaimed manipulator and hero of the action of the Crusades, but also a doomed and ungodly man—Richard shifts between his maternal heritage of the demonic, which is projected from his historical father onto his textual mother, and his paternal heritage as undoubted King of England, which is a textual endorsement of later fact rather than contemporary historical truth. His heritage and identity are in doubt. This fragmentation emerges in a number of ways. Differing explanations of the same event abound. For example, Richard simply lies or forgets his vows, especially when he is angry, so that we are uncertain of the truth of events and motives—and hence, we are uncertain of the character responsible for those events. A sense of fragmentation is also apparent when Richard is compared to other characters, who seem more stable, such as his closest imitators and courtiers, Fulk Doyly and Baron Multoun. The poet displays some of this ambiguity by literally changing and disguising his character, in ways that are similar to the medieval custom of the carnival king, who is subjected to abuse, who is a fool, and who is a figure of parody.

As mentioned above, the same event is treated several times. We might suppose that the more times an event is described, the better our understanding of the characters involved. But in this poem, on the contrary, the poet gives us several perspectives on the same event, and the result is chaos for our understanding when we seek a single subject. As in other medieval texts focusing on real historical characters, events are repeated: here, it is the same event that is repeated, not a similar event occurring later which displays a character's growth. This bewildering variety of character traits is more than a series of undigested folklore motif accretions. Rather, the author revises constantly, and in proffering so many versions of Richard, he creates a subject that is spread over many discourses.

For example, directly after he becomes king, Richard holds a tournament. Richard acts according to romance decorum, and disguises himself, so that others may freely challenge him in the melee. This disguise is conventional on a superficial level, but the disguise quickly becomes confusing, as the author elaborates on the rhetorical details of the disguises. There are three encounters, one with unnamed knights, one with Fulk Doyly, and one with Baron Multoun, and Richard loses all but the first encounters with unnamed knights, despite being visited by signs of God's approval.

The author describes Richard in this way:

> Kynge Rycharde gan hym dysguyse
> In a full stronge queyntyse.
> He came out of a valaye
> For to se of theyr playe,
> As a knyght auentorous.
> Hys atyre was orgulous:
> All togyder coleblacke
> Was his horse, without lacke;
> And aboute his necke a bell,
> Wherfore the reason j shall you telle.
> The kynde of the rauen is,
> In trauayll for to be, jwys;
> Sygnyfyaunce of the bell,
> With holy chyrche for to dwelle
> And them to noy and to greue
> That be not in the ryght byleve. (267-84)

He appears with the black raven, which is both a mad creature and a sign of a "trauayl" (279) to come; the bell signifies a close relationship

with the Church, and Richard is victorious. Next, he appears in red, from out of the wood, on a blood red horse:

> And in another tyre he hym dyght.
> Upon a stede rede as blode,
> With all the tyre that on hym stode,
> Horse and shelde, armure and man,
> That no man sholde knowe hym than;
> Upon his creste a rede hounde,
> The tayle henige to the grounde.
> That was sygnyfycacyoun
> The hethen folke to brynge downe,
> Them to slee for Goddes love
> And Crysten men to bryng aboue. (332-42)

Baron Multoun turns Richard's "strong stroke aside," and tells him:

> "Felowe, forth thou ryde,
> With thy peres go and playe!
> Come no more here, j the praye!
> And sykerly, yf thou do,
> Thou shalt haue a knock or two!" (356-60)

Richard tries again but the Baron withstands Richard's efforts, and casually strikes him a blow that lifts Richard's feet out of the stirrups. Richard flees, saying that he will not take any more of those blows:

> Full swythe awaye he gan ryde,
> Out of the prees there besyde.
> To hymselfe he sayd tho:
> "Of suche strokes kepe j no mo." (379-82)

Deciding to change disguise again, Richard wears white, with a red cross on his shoulder:

> Upon his heed a doue white—
> sygnyfycacyoun of the holy spyryte—
> To be bold to wynne the pryse,
> And dystroye Goddes enemyes. (393-96)

A white dove is on his head, suggesting divine approval. Fulk Doyly withstands Richard's best effort without any reaction at all, and then knocks Richard off his horse:

And his steropes he forbare;
Such a stroke had he neuer are,
He was so astonyed of that dente
That nye he had his lyfe lente.
And for that stroke that hym was gyuen
He ne wyst whether it was daye or euen.
Tho he recouered of his swowe,
To his palays he hym drowe. (419-26)

This is the poet's first description of the events.

When Richard later summons Fulk and Multoun, they describe being attacked by a madman, who was followed by a sinister black raven, and then relate that knights on the battlefield proclaim, "þis is a devyl, and no man, / þat oure folk felles and sleeth" (500-01). Multoun says he was attacked by a devil, and that the Lord helped him send this "foole," to deal with other fools like himself (535). Fulk describes the man in the Crusader costume as "pouke," (568) and as a "wode schrewe," whom he told to "go play wiþ hem þat is þy peres" (575). Richard laughs, proclaims that the disguised figure was himself, and announces that the three of them will visit the Holy Land disguised as pilgrims, and so ends this episode.

This is one of many such repetitions of events in the narrative, but I have chosen this episode because it displays Richard's enigmatic character, juxtaposed as it is with the two knights, and because it suggests that explanation and expansion are futile. Who is Richard? The narrator cheerfully combines opposing meanings, in his explanation of the symbols that surround Richard. The raven is mad, and its bell a sign of close contact with the church. This is not impossible to reconcile in a theology which can account for being a fool for God, but that is not Multoun's interpretation. Multoun views the black horse and apparel with suspicion, and sees the raven as a clear sign of diabolical nature. Next, the crusader disguise leads Fulk to suppose that his opponent is a demented fairy-creature. Most bizarre of all is Richard's utter lack of reaction to these interpretations, and the knights' calm acceptance of the fact that this apparition was the king in disguise:

Kyng Rychard sat fol stylle and louȝ
And sayde: "Frendys sykyrly,
Takes nouȝt to greeff, for it was j.
Whenne ȝe were gaderyd alle in fere,
Auentorous j com, in þis manere,

Who so was strengest ȝow to asaye,
And who cowde best strokes paye."

. . . . . .

þey grauntyd hym hys askyng
Wiþouten any agaynsayying,
Wiþ hym to lyve and to dye,
And lette nouȝt for love ne eye.
On þe book þey layde here hand,
To þat forewarde for to stand,
And kyste hem þanne alle þree,
Trewe sworn for to bee. (584-90, 601-08)

The poet presents Fulk and Multoun throughout the narrative as stable, unimaginative warriors, who mimic Richard's chivalric qualities in battles, sieges, adventures, and manners; here they discern something different from themselves in Richard, some inherent split in his character between his appearance and his reality, some fragmentation of his personality. They accept it "wiþouten any agaynsayying" (602), and the poet continues past this indication of fragmented character.

In this text, Richard is both abused and symbolically dismembered, as he changes disguises, and his behavior is usually outrageous, in the sense that he violates conventions and decorum. Structural repetition creates a Richard who is a boy too young to joust, a devil who slays in the melee, contrary to the law of the Church, a man who is mad, a man who abides by the Church's laws; importantly, Richard is a figure of irrationality, a puck, a woodshrew, a crusader who will slay the heathen while attended by that symbol of God's spirit, a white dove, and a man who can draw from the best two knights in the realm a ceremony of feudal loyalty when they swear to disguise themselves as pilgrims to the Holy Land.

Certainly, Richard's actions after the tournament involve standard feudal behavior when he gives the kiss of loyalty to his new comrades. However, this *aventure* parodies the standard romance episode of the disguised hero whose prowess proclaims him royal. The poet constantly invents and re-invents Richard in a neurotic replaying of the chivalric desire to assert identity in adventures. To this end, Richard disguises himself, and poses theatrically, seeking to see and to be seen. As noted above, this disguise is confusing, and while it succeeds initially, it con tains the seeds of its own failure. Richard is the king in disguise. However, the disguise does not work as it is intended to work. No one stops battle and proclaims Richard's royal prowess; no one has a revelation

battle and proclaims Richard's royal prowess; no one has a revelation of his identity. Instead, practically everyone concerned focuses on the maternal images Richard is projecting: his madness and alliance with the devil, which co-exist with the paternal image of law and the church. But no one recognizes the identity with his father which would proclaim him Richard. As an adventure that establishes identity, this is a failure, and Richard is faced with the necessity of explaining his identity to his men. Richard fluctuates between the paternal and the maternal elements of his character in this episode. He takes on the role of the romance hero, who is king, who wears the emblems of the church and its crusading authority and the symbolic order. However, he is also the creature of the maternal, at least insofar as the demonic nature of the Plantagenet men has been projected onto her. Where Henry II actually boasted of his descent from the devil, this text makes Richard's mother the source of the demonic. Richard is defeated, not just once, but several times, and that defeat is the sign of Richard's imperfect repression of the infantile alliance with the maternal; older victorious knights mock his evident youth, and bandy accusations about his parentage and sanity in a rehearsal of the fact that Richard is still apparently the creature of the maternal and the abject, who threatens dissolution of the homosocial world of battle by his presence. Significantly, Fulk and Multoun charge him with breaking the rules of tournaments by slaying indiscriminately. Knights in romances frequently discover their own prowess and strengthen their sense of identity in *aventures*: in a sense, their relations with society reflect their identities back to them, confirming or reaffirming their status as knights. Richard may very well find out who the greatest knights are, and he did have an adventure, but we are left with the fact that Richard's identity as pre-eminent knight or king is at least temporarily destroyed in this episode. The disguised king is thrashed and becomes a figure of mockery, just as the carnival king is abused and mocked. In this text, the king is uncrowned, in earnest, and only afterwards, when he returns to his castle, does Richard assert his identity as king.[13]

The poet's attribution of events to the marvelous and to the demonic suggests simultaneously the desire to ascribe causes to unexplainable events and the recognition of the role of the irrational in human affairs. Richard is the hero of the romance, and stands at the center of the text, but he is only partially glimpsed and is unintelligible.

The author shapes Richard's character as a changeable figure, whose motivations are uncertain, by using a variety of discourses. The startling number of minor characters in this romance prepare us for the

fact that Richard's adventures are not solely his, since so many other people are involved and have their own version of events: they are the adventures of seduced maidens, terrorized kings, Saracen envoys and ambassadors, English soldiers, French advisors, stray Greeks and Cypriots, and haplessly overwhelmed peasants and townsfolk of all varieties. Not only do these people have a different perspective on events, but they also provide different discourses within the romance, including the discourse of lovesickness and courtly romance, the language of treaties, the formal and courtly discourse of Saladin, the oaths of soldiers, and the language of the divine.

For instance, when Richard returns from the Holy Land for the first time, in his disguise as a palmer, and is betrayed into the hands of the king by a minstrel whom he snubs, the princess of the castle suffers from lovesickness, like a conventional princess in a courtly romance. Appropriately, she dwells in a bower, loves from afar, and conspires both to sleep with Richard and to provide him a means of escape from prison and from the lion set upon him by her father. (881-1242) . The lady is "free" (1059), she has "of hym pyte" (905), and she proclaims, when Richard suggests that she leave, "I schal dye here ffor þy love!" (1054) . Richard finally arranges ransom, and then ignores the princess, whose father banishes her; the queen hides her, saying with all the optimism of the discourse of courtly romance:

> "Ðou schalt dwelle wiþ me,
> Tyl King Rychard sende afftyr þee,
> As a kyng dos afftyr his qwene.
> So j rede þat it schal bene." (1239-42)

Mordred delays supplies for Richard's crusade to the Holy Land the following year, and that is the only reason for Richard's return as far as the text is concerned. Richard regains the ransom along with a supply route, and the princess urges her father to make peace: "Kyng Rychard gan hym in armes take, / And kyste hym fful ffele syþe" (1612-13)—but he does not marry the princess. Although Richard's actions in making peace are described in conventional terms, Richard does not pay any heed to the expectations which the discourse of courtly romance associated with the princess and her mother have raised. When Richard does fulfill the role of courtly knight, it is often to seduce maidens of castles he intends to capture or to score a point off his enemies (the Greeks, the Cypriots, most Germans, and the King of France at all times).

acter, it is important to remember that Richard is an Englishman in this anonymous English romance. The author's use of conventional patriotic rhetoric leads to further incoherence. Richard is King of England; he speaks English, swears English oaths, and has the views of an Englishman with French possessions, shown by his quarrels with the French over lordship of continental domans, even though his primary military concerns are in the East. This chauvinism serves to differentiate him from the French king and his men, and from Saladin; this display also serves as a focus for Richard's personality, and therefore includes Richard in the specific cultural space of the landed English aristocracy who have secondary possessions in France. The portrayal is clearly a matter of national chauvinism in the opposition between Philip and Richard, and one of religious antagonism in Richard's dealings with Saladin.

Richard's quarrels over lordship of continental lands, such as Anjou, Poitou, and Normandy, are cast in the favorable light of national prejudice, and Richard is a unifying figure in warfare, courtliness, and religion. King Philip of France is the villain of the piece, as shown by the episode of King Tanker, who delays Richard on his way to the Holy Land. We glimpse Richard's temper and an opponent king's despair, when Richard marches into Tanker's lands. Tanker is unwittingly made a proxy in the Franco-English power struggle, which does reflect Richard and Philip's political machinations. The two kings intrigued and waged war against each other throughout their lives:

> A tresoun þouȝte þe Kyng of Fraunce,
> To doo Kyng R. [sic] a destaunce.
> To Kyng Tanker he sente a wryt,
> þat turnyed hym siþene to lytyl wyt,
> þat Kyng Rychard wiþ strenþe of hand
> Wolde hym dryue out of his land. (1677-82)

King Tanker prepares for war against Richard, who warns him:

> "And i praye the, Syr Tanker kynge,
> Procure me none evyll thynge!
> For many man weneth to greue other,
> And on his heed falleth the fother.
> For whoso wayteth me despyte,
> Hymselfe shall nought passe quyte." (1737-42)

On the way to the Holy Land, an English knight begs Richard for help, further demonstrating the antipathy between the French and the English armies, who consider each other enemies:

> "Mercy Rycharde, for Marye mayde!
> With the Frensshmen and the Gryffownes
> My brother lyeth slayne in the townes." (1792-94)

Elsewhere, he personally censures Philip of France for granting mercy to a town that asked for clemency after swearing to convert:

> "And j dede nouȝt soo;
> . . . . . .
> Ðe ffolk come off boþe cytees,
> Cryde mercy, and ffylle on knees.
> . . . . . .
> To sloo men was me neuere leef."
> Kyng R. took it to greff,
> And on hym gan to look rowe. (4679, 4681-82, 4687-89)

Richard says that he wants to kill everyone, including women and children, in every town in the Holy Land. Fulk, Multoun, and Richard boast of this when they recount their adventures (4665-78). Nonetheless, Richard is renowned for his mercy. In all these episodes, Richard is the unifying focus of English knighthood.

In opposition to the "heathen" Saracen, Richard is an ambiguous figure. The narrative concerning the two men demonstrates Richard's fragmented character in opposition to a virtual caricature of a "paynim" Saladin. In this poem, Saladin is generally evil, and there are few complicating elements in his character.[14] Saladin sends Richard a djinn horse, which an angel must tell Richard how to overcome so that the beast becomes safe (5481-797). We might expect that the opposition between the two is emblematic of the clash between Christianity and Islam, between two rival kings, between the demonic and the heavenly.[15]

Richard and Saladin's opposition should be simple, in the way that the opposition between Philip and Richard is simple. Richard, however, returns Saladin's gestures of chivalry and requests for honorable settlement with barbarity, when he sacrifices the children of the emirs, turning them into a cannibal feast. This episode with the hostage children is highlighted by the author's apparently innocuous juxtaposition

child and comforting himself with the thought that a Christian king will not harm children, with the gruesome preparations for this feast back at Richard's camp (3366-75). The author may have been merely interested in wringing the episode for its pathos, but the effect is to turn our expectations about the two characters around.

Richard claims that God approves his actions, and then outrages his own advisors, laughing madly as the covers are swept off the platters at the ambassadorial feast. Saladin and his court are decorous and formal, regardless of their religion, while Richard's court is outrageous and amused at cannibalism. The juxtaposition of the two monarchs and the stunning difference in their behavior calls Richard's identity as a king into question. In the Holy Land, as in England during the tournament, Richard's identity as a Christian is uncertain. For Multoun at the tournament in England, Richard was "a devyl, and no man, / þat oure folk felles and sleeth" (500-01). In the Holy Land, the ambassador emirs hoped that no Christian king would act as Richard threatened to against ransomable prisoners. But after the feast, they, like Multoun, see Richard as "þe develys broþir, / þat sles oure men and þus hem eetes" (3484-85).

While Richard and his court laboriously plan a cannibal feast, Saladin speaks the language of kings, treaties, and romance chivalry:[16]

> We rede, make acord
> with King Richard, that is so stout,
> For to delyver oure children oute,
> That they ne be honged, ne to drawe. (3366-68)

His advisors and messengers follow chivalric custom and courtesy, "To King Richard the tresore broughte / On knees of grace hym besoughte" (3381-82). His advisors speak colloquially and tenderly of their children, whom they love,

> Hou þey begunne to chaunge here hewe,
> Fore here ffrendes þey syȝyd sore,
> þat þey hadde lost for evermore.
> Off here kynde blood þey were;
> þenne þey myȝte weel fforbere
> For to pleye and ffor to leyȝe. (3470-75)

while the emirs complain:

Welaway, we leve to longe!
Herde we nevere swylke mervayle,
It is a devyl withoute fayle! (3662-64)

Saladin's court has a studied grace and conventionality in all of these examples, while Richard's men exchange scatological insults with the French in colloquial language:

"And called to our men saunce fayle:
"Go hom, dogges, with your tayle!
For all your boost and your orguyl
Men shall threste in your cuyle!" (1828-32)

Richard swears vengeance against the Greeks, "I shall me of them so awreke, / That all the worlde therof shall speke" (1781-82). At the end of his ironic speech to the ambassador emirs, Richard proclaims:

As j am kyng, Cristen, and trewe,
ȝe schole be þeroff sertayn,
In saff cundyt to wende agayn,
For I ne wolde, ffor no þyng,
At wurd off me in the world scholde spryng,
I were so evyl off maneres
For to mysdoo messangers. (3514-20)

Richard only approaches the formal discourse of a "Cristen king" in irony, thereby heightening the contrast between the two courts. Saladin, despite his gift of a demon horse, is the European chivalric monarch here. Richard is the devil on the loose again, merely transplanted from England to the Holy Land.

Other members of his family are the sites of textual invention as well. His mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, with whom Richard was historically partisan against his father, is safely contained as a folk-tale demonized other in an attempt to excise her. She returns in the text, however, as she does in history. Famously influential with her son, Eleanor's actual and historical function as a locus of rebellion and frag mentation within the state and the family is transformed into a fragmentation of the textual royal family, to which she only tangentially belongs. The text changes Richard's rebellion at the age of fifteen, together with his brother, Young King Henry, against his father, into loyalty with the father against the mother. Even his acknowledgement that

he is born of the devil becomes a matter of transformation: the gender switch in this text renders the female demonic and saves the male parent and primogeniture. These two incidents exchange Richard's actual loyalties with projected imaginary ones. His mother Eleanor (the textual Cassiodorien) comes from the sea, and her origin in a kingdom that acknowledges patriarchal law only in a demonic parody makes her a representative of the Other. She threatens the symbolic order of identification with the father, attempting to destroy paternal inheritance only after she has ignored for fifteen years the "substitute for a longing for the father" that religion espouses.[17] She attempts to kidnap and keep John, the heir presumptive, and is then elided from the text. However, Richard's character keeps signifying aspects of the introjected maternal imago, and wavers between hostility to, and attempts to become, as like his ideal ego as possible. Since his parents are ambiguous figures, so his relations with them are ambivalent. As Richard is the child of a mother who must be elided for paternal identification to occur, so his object-cathexis of his mother must give way to admiration and imitation of his father. Richard's instability and hostility to others is a sign of his incompletely resolving the Oedipal struggle.

This consequent fragmentation continues with other projections of the grotesque, most noticeably in the cannibalism scene, where Richard laughs at the fragmented bodies of children. He repeats the action of infantile introjection, where the child ingests the mother physically and then metaphorically, when he acts against helpless innocents, showing that he is powerful enough to inflict on others what he suffers and fears throughout the text.

Richard tries to control the posing of himself: he is the conduit for the gaze in many episodes. But he is rarely successful in posing as a singular signifier. He is demonic and princely, a romance hero when he slays the lion, and simultaneously supremely bored with the business of continuing the paternal image into the next generation. He doesn't want the princess (any of them) and refuses the offer. By opting out of the completion of his role, where the victorious prince gets the princess, Richard refuses to stay within the homosocial and paternal realm. The possession of the princess is the usual signifier that the knight or prince has attained or become the object of desire within the paternal order. As noted above, marriage to a princess also provides closure and another generation, the continuation of the paternal by other means.

In the cannibalism episode, the Saracen ambassadors look at him, then at their fragmented children when Richard takes the covers off the plates, and then they look back at him when he laughs. They do not

He is no representative of European courtliness. In his fluctuation between exhibitionism and voyeurism, Richard projects his own fragmentation. His laughter is a reaction to the visible grotesque, to threatened and therefore projected and externalized transformation, to physical fragmentation personally delayed and generally imposed. His identity, so fractured en route, is recapitulated in the bodies of the children, and the humor and theatrical staging of this anxiety displays these personality disruptions.

Throughout the romance, Richard poses for others, anxious over loyalties and origins and identities, in every country and in every action. Other quasi-selves (his brother, his mother, his father, his courtiers, his opponents) are rewritten to account for his fears and his anxieties. He is a blurred man, a voyeur who fears the sight of the self and thus disguises himself, and an exhibitionist, who desires to display himself as one more version of a king. Richard thus remains a caricature of himself, a site of permeability and the grotesque, in a text of transformation.

By using so many varieties of discourse, the author presents us with a fictionally realistic world; this means that he also goes beyond the conventional, producing a chronicle, an adventure, a holy war, and a parody of a king, who is the exemplar of chivalry and a demonized other. Richard cannot be accommodated within the romance genre, no matter how hard the author tries. The depiction of character ultimately fails to produce a coherent personality; what we see is a complex identity constituted as a series of contradictory desires to ally with or to abjure the paternal or the maternal images. Richard shifts between the symbolic and the imaginary orders, appropriating and discarding roles and discourses throughout the text. The successive attempts to insert him within various discourses fragment him as a subject. The author rhetorically elaborates his main character by opposing discourses, shifting from romance to prophecy, to chivalric handbook, to colloquial speech, to political charter, to song, and in so doing he portrays a character who is simultaneously an exemplar of most virtues and all vices, who has no single subject position. The more fabulous the text, the more the author elaborates Richard's character, the more fragmented he becomes.

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Notes

[1] Early scholars thought that the translation was composed about the year 1300, but more recent critics agree on a date some forty or fifty years later. The translation exists in seven manuscripts, in a mixed Midland dialect, in four-stress rhyming couplets, and is copied from the Anglo-Norman original. For all quotations and references in this article, I have used Karl Brunner's *Der mittelenglische Versroman über Richard Löwenherz: kritische Ausgabe nach allen Handschriften mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen und deutscher Übersetzung*, Wiener Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie, 52 (Wien: Braumüller, 1913). For early paleographical and philological criticism of the romance, which offers Latin chronicles as sources, see F. Jentsch, "Die mittelenglische romanze *Richard Coeur de Lion* und ihre quellen," *Englische Studien* 15 (1891): 161-246. Similarly, Gaston Paris discusses sources ranging from Robert Mannying to Peter Langtoft, noting that five of the manuscripts are "relatively historical, while the remaining two expand the fabulous material" (353). Wynkyn de Worde printed the romance in 1509, relying on the A or longer, more "fabulous" version. See Gaston Paris, "Le Roman de *Richard Coeur de Lion*," *Romania* 26 (1897): 353-93.

[2] Most biographers of Richard uneasily try to reconcile Richard's reputation for chivalry with the known facts of his life. This uneasiness with Richard's cruelty, his prowess, his incompetence in finance and in military strategy, and his startling bravery begins in his own lifetime, and continues through to modern critics. See Arthur Hassall and W. W. Stubbs, eds., *Memorials of the Reign of Richard I: Historical Introductions to the Rolls Series* (London: Longman's, 1902); Kate Norgate, *Richard the Lion Heart* (London: Macmillan, 1924); Jacob Abbot, *History of King Richard the First of England* (New York: Harper, 1857); James A. Brundage, *Richard the Lion Heart* (New York: Scribner's, 1974). In *Richard Coeur de Lion: A Biography* (London: Hale, 1958), Philip Henderson also focuses on the role of Eleanor, as do Regine Pernoud, *Richard Coeur de Lion* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), and John Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1976).

[3] See John Finlayson, "*Richard, Coer de Lyon*: Romance, History, or Something in Between?" *Studies in Philology* (1990): 156-80. There are two groups among the manuscripts: those representing the A, or

long version, and those representing the B, or shorter version. The A manuscripts add about 1200 lines to the B version, and the extension is chiefly to do with Richard's birth, with Eleanor as a demon, and with Richard's tournament, although elements of these are present in all except one of the B version manuscripts (Finlayson 160). While it may be true that the very earliest version of this romance "was a work of rigorously heroic type, even less contaminated by purely fictitious additions than the other manuscripts of the B version" (Finlayson 161), it is the case that all but one of the manuscripts demonstrate a fabulous character. There is no single manuscript which evidences an "heroic" type, and there are six manuscripts and two printed editions which display a romantic and fabulous hero, in varying degrees.

[4] For the classic criticism of this motif, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology P, 1965); See also Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: New York UP, 1978).

[5] See Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968); Hans Robert Jauss, "Chansons de geste et roman courtois," Chanson de Geste und höfischer Roman Heidelberg Kolloquium 30 Januar 1961, *Studia Romanica* 4 (1961): 63-80.

[6] See Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969); Derek Pearsall, "The Development of the Middle English Romance," *Medieval Studies* 27 (1965): 109-12; A.C. Baugh, "The Middle English Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation, and Preservation," *Speculum* 62 (1967): 1-31; John Finlayson, "Definitions of Middle English Romance," *Chaucer Review* 15 (1980): 44-62; Lee Ramsey, *Chivalric Romances* (Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 1983); W. R. J. Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London: Longman, 1987); Carol Fewster, *Traditionality and Genre in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987).

[7] For the notion of play and structure, see Jacques Derrida, *Writing And Difference,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978), especially the chapter "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (178-95).

[8] See Kenneth E. Gadomski, "Narrative Style in *King Horn* and *Havelok the Dane*," in *Journal of Narrative Technique* 15 (1985): 133-45. See also Mary Hynes-Berry, "Cohesion in *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo*," *Speculum* 50 (1975): 652-70 and D.M. Hill, "An Interpretation of *King Horn*," *Anglia* 75 (1957): 157-72; Georgianna Ziegler, "Structural Repetition in *King Horn*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 81 (1980): 403-08. Unless otherwise stated, all references to Middle English romances are from Donald B. Sands' edition, *Middle English Verse Romances* (New York: Holt, 1966).

[9] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957).

[10] See Robert L. Chapman, "A Note on the Demon Queen Eleanor," *Modern Language Notes* 70 (1955): 393-96. Chapman points out that contemporary authors, notably Walter Map, in his *De Nugis Curialium*, spread sexual scandal about Eleanor. Further, Eleanor is a self-confessed adulteress in the ballad, *Queen Eleanor's Confession*. By the year 1260, only fifty years after her death, Eleanor is rumored to have attempted to elope with Saladin (395).

[11] See Bradford B. Broughton, *The Legends of King Richard I Coeur de Lion: A Study of Sources and Variations to the Year 1600* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1966) 12. Broughton recounts Richard's remark, "We who come from the devil must needs go back to the devil," found in *Giraldus Cambrensis, De Principis Instructione Liber*, Ed. George F. Warner, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi, Rolls Series, 21, Pt. 8 (London: H. M. Stationer's Office, 1891) 310. The story about Black Fulk is in William of Malmesbury, *De Regum Gestis Anglorum*, Ed. W. Stubbs, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi, Rolls Series, 90 (London: H. M. Stationer's Office, 1887-1889): 1, 401-02.

[12] The standard chronicles give an account of Richard's siege of Chaluz and his death, particularly Roger Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, Ed. Henry G. Hewlett, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, Rolls Series, 84 (London: H.M. Stationer's Office, 1886) 282-84. The most detailed account, which surfaces in subsequent chronicles and Renaissance legends, is in Ralph de Coggeshale, *Chronicon Anglicanum ab anno M.lxvi ad M.cc*, Ed. Joseph Stevenson, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevii Scriptores, Rolls Series, 66 (London: H. M. Stationer's Office, 1883) 94-96. For more recent accounts, see

Francoise Arbellot, "La verité sur la mort de Richard Coeur de Lion," *Bulletin de la société archéologie-histoire Limousin* 4 (1878) 161-260, 372-87 and Roy J. Pearcy, "*The Alliterative Morte Arthure* VV. 2420-47 and the Death of Richard I," *English Language Notes* 22 (1985): 16-27; several critics print the anonymous Latin epitaph:

> Virus, avaritia, scelus, enormisque libido,
> Faeda fames, atrox elatio, caeca cupido,
> Amnis regnarunt bis quinis, arcabalista
> Arte, manu, telo prostravit viribus ista.

Philip Henderson translates this as follows:

> Venom, avarice, crime, unbounded lust, foul famine, atrocious pride, blind desire, have reigned for twice five years. An archer with art, hand, weapon, strength, did all these overthrow. (244)

[13] Mikhail Bakhtin analyzes the concept in his work on Rabelais, observing:

> . . . the king is the clown. He is elected by all the people and is mocked by all the people. He is abused and beaten when the time of his reign is over, just as the carnival dummy of winter or the dying year is mocked, beaten, torn to piece, burned or drowned even in our time. . . . The clown was first disguised as a king, but once his reign had come to an end, his costume was changed, "travestied," to turn him once more into a clown. The abuse and thrashing are equivalent to a change of costume, to a metamorphosis. Abuse reveals the other, true face of the abused, it tears off his disguise and mask. It is the king's uncrowning. (197)

[14] For the literary role of Islam and Saladin, see William Wistar Comfort, "The Literary Role of the Saracens in the French Epic," *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 55 (1940): 628-59; Gaston Paris, "La legende de Saladin," *Journal des savants* (1893): 489-501; Hamilton Alexander Gibb, *The Life of Saladin: From the Works of Imad-ad-Din and Baha-ad-Din* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973); G. E. von Grunebaum, "The Hero in Medieval Arabic Prose," *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* , eds. Norman T. Burns and Christopher Reagan (London: Hodder, 1975): 83-100.

[15] On the reaction to Islam in the West, and the changing perceptions of Islam, see Philippe Senac, *L'Image de L'Autre: L'Occident médiéval face àl'Islam* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983). Charges of diabolism, sacrilege, despoiling tombs, debauchery, and sexual license featured heavily among the complaints of the church and the nobility (56-59, 68-69, 119); Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches Towards the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984); Amin Malouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, trans. Jon Rothschild (New York: Schocken, 1984); Geoffrey Regan, *Saladin and the Fall of Jerusalem* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); David Nicolle, *Saladin and the Saracens: Armies of the Middle East, 1100-1300* (London: Osprey, 1986); Malcolm Cameron Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982); Hamilton Alexander Gibb, *The Life of Saladin: From the Works of Imad-ad-Din and Baha-ad-Din* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage , 1979); Hans Eberhard Mayer, *The Crusades*, trans. John Gillingham (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1972).

[16] For Saladin's generosity and magnanimity, see extracts of Beha ed-Din Ibn Shedad's *Life of Saladin* in Régine Pernoud, *The Crusades*, trans. Enid McLeod (London: Secker, 1962)173, 187-89. The two kings were courteous to each other at various times (188).

[17] Peter Gay, ed. *The Freud Reader* (New York: Norton, 1989)